



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services
Caswell Developmental Center

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**Caswell Developmental Center Employee to Receive
Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Service**

(Kinston, NC) State employee Daniel W. Rice, III is the recipient of the 2008 Governor's Award for Excellence for his contributions in public service. Considered the highest honor a state employee may receive, the award will be presented to Rice during a ceremony in Raleigh on October 20th. Rice is the Director of Specialized Services at Caswell Developmental Center and the Executive Director for Caswell Center Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization serving individuals and families with developmental disabilities in eastern North Carolina.

"Danny is the ultimate example of what it means to give back to your community. He lives and breathes public service and we are very proud of what he does, not only for our Center and the region that we serve, but for the Lenoir County community," said Beverly Vinson, Director of Caswell Developmental Center.

Rice's passion for public service dates back to the 1970's. In 1974, he joined the *Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society*, a non-profit, nationwide fraternal organization with seven districts and 100,000 members in North Carolina. In 1978, Rice received his first community service award for outstanding contributions to the Woodmen of the World Youth Program; in 1981 he received the Mr. Woodman Award for Kinston Lodge #46; in 1983 he was named one of WOW's Top 10 Outstanding Youth Leaders in America; and he has received the Woodmen's Fraternalist of the Year for North Carolina twice. Rice is currently a member of WOW's National Board of Directors as well as Chairman of WOW's North Carolina Children's Home Program, a volunteer leadership position he has held since 1995. "When we were looking for a chairman to manage this program, Danny was our first choice," said Earl Hughes, a WOW State Officer.

Rice is a member of the *Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce's Governmental Affairs Committee*. Alice Tingle feels that Rice's leadership, advice, and attention to detail as her campaign manager were instrumental in helping her secure and retain her seat on Kinston's City Council for three consecutive terms. "Danny is a natural communicator who has the ability to establish an instant rapport with people," said Ms. Tingle, adding that "he has innate qualities and a dedication to excellence that would make him a strong candidate for public office." Rice has held several leadership roles in Lenoir County's Chamber of Commerce including a seat on its

Board of Directors as well as being a member of its Education Committee. Twice he has received the Chamber's Volunteer of the Month award.

Rice is a member of the founding committee for the *Lenoir County Friends of the Homeless, Inc.* and has also served as President of its Executive Committee for the past 10 years. The Homeless Shelter's mission is to provide temporary housing for transient individuals and families and to provide referral services on a case-by-case basis. "Danny was instrumental in getting FEMA award money to support the shelter," said Connie Smith, the Shelter's accountant. She said that around the shelter, Danny is known as the "go to guy."

When Rice realized that individuals and families with developmental disabilities were living with unmet needs, he was instrumental in establishing the *Caswell Center Foundation, Inc.*, a non-profit organization that serves 38 counties in eastern North Carolina. Rice has been the Foundation's Executive Director since its inception in 1999. Under the Foundation's auspices, Rice established a mini-grant program named Project PRIDE (**P**riority to **I**ndividuals with **D**isabilities in the **E**ast) as a financial resource Area Programs may tap into when all other funding sources in their respective counties have been exhausted. Since 2001, Project PRIDE has awarded \$27,914 to Local Management Entities, which has helped numerous individuals with disabilities enhance their quality of life. He established a second mini-grant program, Project HOME (**H**elping **O**ur Individuals **M**aximize their **E**veryday Lives) through donations given by Caswell employees to the Foundation through the State Employees Combined Campaign. Project HOME grants allow Caswell individuals access to funding that assists them in becoming more independent and achieving a better quality of life. Since 2002, Project PRIDE has awarded \$57,833 to individuals and homes at Caswell Developmental Center. The Foundation also established and administers a college scholarship program to support eastern North Carolina students in achieving educational goals that involve serving families or individuals with developmental disabilities. Launched in 2007, the Foundation's Scholarship Program has awarded \$8,000 in annual scholarships to eight undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students.

Rice has received numerous acknowledgements for his public service including: the Boy Scouts of America Silver Beaver Award; the Good Neighbor Award by the Lenoir County Association of Congregations; and the Jaycees Distinguished Service Award. He is also a Lions Club International Melvin Jones Fellow.

Rice received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in social work, with a specialty in family services, from East Carolina University and the University of NC in Chapel Hill, respectively. He was a social worker for the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina before joining Caswell Developmental Center in 1982 as a Social Work Supervisor. Rice has been the Director of Specialized Services at Caswell since 1986. His wife, Johnnee, is a music teacher at Woodington Middle School and music director at Spilman Memorial Baptist Church. They have two sons: Carson, who lives in Wilmington, North Carolina and Jonathan, who lives in Burbank, California.

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